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ABSTRACT

The Northland Pioneer College (NPC) Library staff has developed a media blitz strategy to publicize its services in rural Arizona. This strategy regularly draws upon a database of newspapers, radio stations, and cable television outlets in the area. Each week a different public service announcement is developed and sent out to agencies on the database. Announcements range from different types of information provided at the college libraries, to the availability of state and federal tax forms. The release material is never more than a page long and is printed on the college stationery. It is noted that this publicity approach has resulted in increased library usage. A copy of the mailing list database currently being used is attached. (MAB)

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SHARING THE GOOD NEWS: A RURAL APPROACH TO PUBLICIZING COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY SERVICES

by

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March 5, 1992

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SHARING THE GOOD NEWS:
A RURAL APPROACH TO PUBLICIZING COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LIBRARY SERVICES

The current economy has had a diverse effect on much of rural Northeastern Arizona. Many of the communities served by Northland Pioneer College, a decentralized community college serving Navajo and Apache counties, have been adversely downsized because of current economic pressures. Many small businesses have had to close, and many jobs have been lost.

Libraries have traditionally been there to help individuals and groups who have been seeking information about almost anything. Since Northland Pioneer College is supported largely by community funding, community residents have been encouraged to use its services, whether or not they are taking classes. The library has always been accessable to all types of community individuals and groups. Groups may use college owned audio-visual equipment, providing it is not needed for classes. Facilities are often used by community groups needing meeting space. The libraries supported by the college in ten different communities are open to anyone who wants to use them.

In times of economic stress, libraries are often called upon to provide services to individuals and groups that would otherwise be buying books and related materials. How do individuals and groups become aware of what services are available to them? Can this be done without great expense?

Will the use of library services increase as a result of publicity efforts?

The library staff of Northland Pioneer College has been faced with the challenge of getting a wide variety of services before the public's eye in the past several months. Some public factions seem greatly appreciative, while others seem to feel that libraries are a luxury and extravagence. A data bank approach has been adopted. All of the communities that are served by the college were surveyed by the library staff to locate newspapers and radio stations. There are no local television stations in the area. In addition, newspapers and radio stations that serve adjacent larger communities were also included. More than twenty different agencies fitting this discription were found, including several cable television outlets that run public service announcements. A media blitz strategy was developed. Each week, a different public service announcement is developed and sent out to agencies on the data bank. Announcements range from different types of information provided at the college libraries, to the availability of state and federal tax forms. Every effort is made to draw the potential library user into the announcement by choosing material that would appeal to a wide variety of users. It was thought that even those individuals who feel libraries are a luxury and extravagence might be pursuaded to give the libraries a try.

After about nine months of trying this approach, we are able to say that the approach is successful. The cable companies often use library material when talking about the college. Radio stations are often looking for public service spot materials, and many of those sent to the radio stations have led into interviews. Rural newspapers are always looking for fill material, and information about libraries is most suitable.

In preparing material for release, it should be noted that what is distributed is never more than a page long. It is always sent out on college stationary. It could be said that this is a capsule version, and this is the way it is intended. The purpose is to draw an individual or group into one of our library settings. We don't tell the whole story because if we did, a library visit might not be necessary. Most of our services are available in person or on the telephone. People can call us from the privacy of their own home, or from the office.

This particular approach is especially effective in rural settings, where a community college wears several community hats. A community college library is often a great cultural asset, which appeals to the academic and recreational needs of the community. In short, a community college library which reflects the needs of the community it serves will wear many hats. Rural newspapers and radio stations are often looking for community interest material, and what we send them fits well into this category. I

highly recommend this approach in a rural setting. I have included a copy of the database we are using, so that the reader can get a feel for the types of agencies where our material is disbursed.

This approach has been particularly successful at Northland Pioneer College because it has resulted in increased usage. We have been able to measure this increased usage because new patrons are calling and coming in asking about the services that are highlighted in our announcements.

Public Affairs Channel/Post Newsweek Cable
P. O. Drawer 490
Winslow, AZ 86047

Public Affairs Channel/Post Newsweek Cable
P. O. Box 208
Holbrook, AZ 86025

Public Affairs Channel/Post Newsweek Cable
340 N. 9th Street
Show Low, AZ 85901

The Navajo Nation Messinger
Post Office Box 1210
Gallup, NM 87305

The Reminder
P. O. Drawer AA
Winslow, AZ 86047

The Navajo-Hopi Observer
P. O. Box 2548
Flagstaff, AZ 86002

The Navajo TIMES
Box 310
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Radio Station KTNN
P. O. Box 2569
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Arizona SUN
P. O. Box 1849
Flagstaff, AZ 86002

Gallup INDEPENDENT
P. O. Box 1210
Gallup, NM 87305

Pine Graphics Weekly
P. O. Box 88
Overgaard, AZ 85933

White Mountain INDEPENDENT
P. O. Box 1570
Show Low, AZ 85901

White Mountain INDEPENDENT
P. O. Box 1058
Springerville, AZ 85938

White Mountain INDEPENDENT
P. O. Box 639
St. Johns, AZ 85936

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Eager, AZ 85925

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P. O. Box 940
Show Low, AZ 85901

Radio Station KVWM
P. O. Box 970
Show Low, AZ 85901

Radio Station KRVZ - KQAZ
Post Office Box 1069
Springerville, AZ 85938

Fort Apache SCOUT
P. O. Box 898
Whiteriver, AZ 85941

Radio Station KNNB
P. O. Box 310
Whiteriver, AZ 85941

Winslow MAIL
P. O. Drawer AW
Winslow, AZ 86047

Holbrook TRIBUNE NEWS
P. O. Box L
Holbrook, AZ 86025

Radio Station KINO
P. O. Drawer K
Winslow, AZ 86047

Radio Station KDJI
P. O. Box 430
Holbrook, AZ 86025